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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes how students and other researchers can use historical resources in their community to explore the history of their school and to determine how that history relates to community-wide and statewide developments. Although the manual is written primarily from the perspective of the public schools, the underlying theme of the manual--that local resources can be used by students and teachers for the recovery and understanding of local educational history--applies to nonpublic schools as well. The manual can be used on either the elementary or secondary levels. Following a brief introduction in Chapter I, the second chapter discusses the development of K-12 education in New York state. Chapter III contains a chronology of major events in education in New York from 1784-1984. The fourth and fifth chapters describe the variety of historical records and other resources available for researching the history of local schools and suggests where to find and how to use them. Chapter VI provides suggestions for classroom activities on local educational history. The booklet concludes with a list of further reading materials. (PM)

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RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR SCHOOL

Suggestions for Students and Teachers

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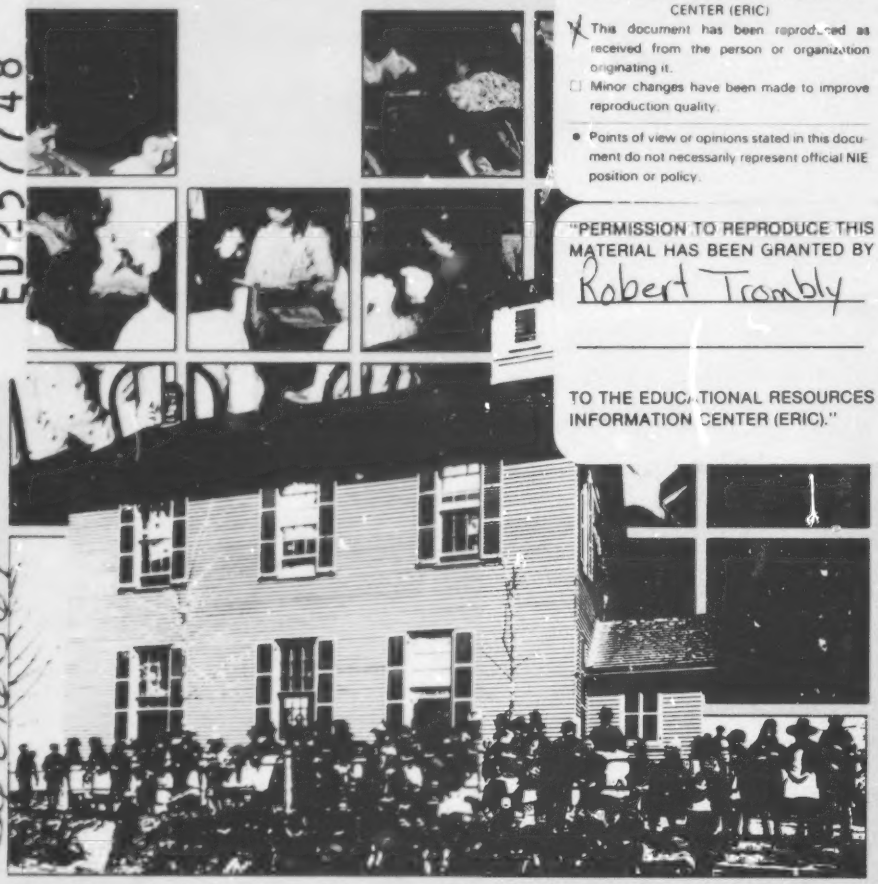

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Researching the History of Your School: Suggestions for Students and Teachers

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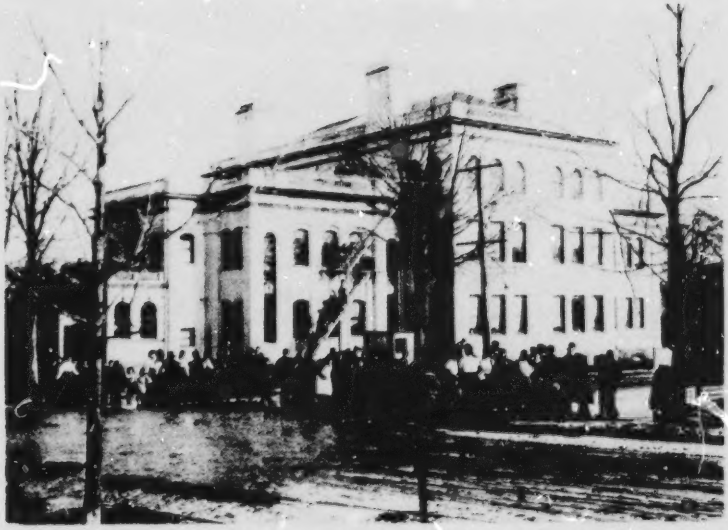

School Number 1 on Court Street, White Plains, ca. 1915.

I. Introduction

The year 1984 marked the Bicentennial of the Board of Regents and The University of the State of New York. The University includes all educational institutions in the State, and the Regents are the governing and policymaking body for the University. To help commemorate the accomplishments of two centuries of education in New York State, the State Archives has produced this booklet, *Researching the History of Your School*. The booklet describes how students and other researchers can use historical resources in their community to explore the history of their school and to determine how that history relates to community-wide and statewide developments. Because the State Archives has statutory responsibility for supervision over the records of public schools and other local governments, and because we are especially familiar with public school records and other local government records, the manual is written primarily from the perspective of the public schools. However, the underlying theme of the manual — that local resources can be used by students and teachers for the recovery and understanding of local educational history — applies to nonpublic schools as well. Most nonpublic schools will have records that are similar to the public records examples cited, and most of the activities suggested in the manual are as relevant to students in nonpublic schools as to those in public schools. Through these activities, students can develop a better perspective on their own educational experience. The activities presented in the manual can be used on either the elementary or secondary levels, assuming appropriate adjustment is made to suit the grade level.

Students can benefit in several ways from researching their school's history. Whether students are looking into the history of school buildings, considering reasons for curriculum changes, re-

searching school sports, or examining changes in disciplinary procedures over the years, the "real" record can lead them to become deeply involved in their subject. This is history that is near at hand and that has a direct connection to their lives. Students also develop a better appreciation of their school and how it has evolved. They learn to relate the history of their own school to broader educational developments in New York State. Finally, they can discover how to relate the history of the community's central educational institution — the school — to the broader history of the community itself. This, in turn, leads students to consider their own role as citizens of both the school and the community.

Researching and interpreting school history also helps develop sound cognitive skills. Study of photographs, letters, yearbooks, minutes of meetings, special reports, and other sources encourages the development of information-gathering and reading skills. Through first-hand experience with original sources, students learn how to reconstruct history from available historical evidence. Sometimes that evidence is incomplete, inconclusive, or even contradictory; this challenges students to weigh the evidence for themselves and reach their own conclusions. This process encourages the development of critical thinking skills. Students can be encouraged to put their newly acquired historical insights to work, through question-and-answer sessions, class discussions, and structured debate on the meaning and significance of historical events. Writing skills can be developed through assignments requiring students to summarize what they have learned, to express their own views on specific developments in school history, and to use proper forms of citation for the primary sources they have consulted.

The booklet begins with a short historical essay describing changes that have had ramifications for education at the local level throughout the State. A list of "milestones in education" provides an additional chronological framework for study of an individual school's history. Other chapters describe historical records and other resources, indicate how to locate them, and suggest ways of using them in classroom settings. A final section provides suggestions for further reading both in the history of education and in the techniques of using historical records and other historical sources to teach history.

This project was coordinated by the External Programs Office of the State Archives. David M. Ment, Head, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, wrote the historical essay and provided the list of milestones and the suggestions for readings on the history of education. The remainder of the booklet was prepared primarily by Kathleen D. Roe, Archivist II with the State Archives. Ms. Roe is also author of the State Archives' manual on *Teaching With Historical Records* (Albany, 1981). That manual suggests techniques for using historical records in the classroom. Copies were distributed to all Social Studies Curriculum Coordinators in 1981. For information on how to secure additional copies, please contact the State Archives.

The photographs used in the present publication are from the State Archives' holdings, which also include many other records documenting the history of education in the Empire State.

LARRY J. HACKMAN

State Archivist

March 1985

II. The Development of Elementary and Secondary Education in New York

Introduction

The history of education in New York has no single beginning date. Wherever people have lived, they have educated themselves and their children. The process and content of education and the institutions developed to perform this function have changed over time. Only part of the task of education has ever been carried out by the schools. Newspapers, libraries, apprenticeships, churches, and especially families, have been key educators, transmitting knowledge, skills, and attitudes to successive generations. If you were a farmer's son or daughter in New York two hundred years ago, you might have attended school some of the time, but your family or neighbors would have been primarily responsible for teaching the skills and attitudes most essential to rural life. Even today, when most students spend twelve years in elementary and high school and additional time at college, the educational significance of family, church, and television cannot be overestimated.

Yet the role of the school is crucial. Schools are the key elements in a formal, organized education system. They systematically organize and present information, develop skills, and perpetuate a people's values and heritage. The development of schools and the education of young people have long been regarded as important public responsibilities here in New York. The State's first Governor, George Clinton, summed up this attitude well in a 1792 message to the legislature urging "the promotion and encouragement of learning" by the State. It was, he explained,

> the peculiar duty of the government of a free state, where the highest employments are open to citizens of every rank, to endeavor by the establishment of schools and seminaries, to diffuse that degree of literature which is necessary to the due discharge of public trusts.[1]

Schools in Colonial New York

Colonial New York did not have a school *system*, but it did have individual *schools*. As communities were settled and assumed a degree of permanence, a variety of types of schools arose. These included church- and town-sponsored schools as well as schools conducted by independent schoolmasters.

In some of the towns of the Hudson Valley and on Long Island, where Dutch settlers predominated, schooling was a community responsibility carried out through the Dutch Reformed Church. The people of the town of Brooklyn, for example, appointed their first schoolmaster in 1661, whose responsibilities included those of court messenger, "voorlezer" (reader in church), "voorsanger" (singer of psalms), sexton, bellringer, and gravedigger.

In New York City, with its more cosmopolitan population, many alternative forms of schooling were created. Anglican, Dutch, and Jewish groups established "charity" schools, teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, primarily to poor children. Independent schoolmasters, charging a relatively low tuition, taught elementary subjects as well as such practical topics as navigation and surveying. Some schoolmasters offered more advanced studies, including Latin and Greek, as preparation for college. In 1754, Kings College was opened, with Anglican support, completing the range of schooling available in the City.

None of the schools of the colonial period were "public" schools in the modern sense. Many had religious sponsorship, most charged tuition, and attendance was voluntary. Yet, in the context of their time, they were perceived as carrying out the public's desire to provide educational opportunities.

Education in the New State

George Clinton was not alone in believing that a revolutionary republic had to assume increased responsibility for the education of its citizens. This was a common thread of republican thinking of the late 1700s and early 1800s, and was a major reason for the establishment of the Regents of The University of the State of New York in 1784. The function of the Regents was to encourage the creation of a network of educational institutions throughout the State. Under the revised law of 1787, Columbia College (the new post-revolutionary name for Kings College) was given a new

High school library, Mamaroneck High School, ca. 1910.

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charter, and the Regents received authority to charter additional colleges and academies (secondary schools) and to conduct a general oversight of these institutions.

Among the first academies chartered by the Regents, in 1787, were Erasmus Hall, in Flatbush, Kings County; North Salem Academy, in Westchester; and Clinton Academy, in Suffolk County. These were followed by over 400 more academies during the late 1700s and 1800s, including some chartered directly by the Legislature. Until the late 1800s the academies served as the major form of secondary school in the State. Generally established by a board of trustees made up of community leaders, academies were a public/private hybrid. Most academies charged tuition and some placed town officials on their boards and gave preferred admission to local pupils. They were an educational hybrid as well. Most offered standard college-preparatory subjects like Latin, Greek, and mathematics, but since pupils and their tuition were in high demand, academies also offered whatever subjects of study seemed likely to appeal. They frequently offered elementary-level instruction and nonclassical academic subjects as well as more "practical" topics ranging from engineering to embroidery. Although independently governed, the academies

were seen as public institutions because they carried out the State's public educational purposes. Therefore, from time to time, funds were appropriated to the Regents for distribution to academies, and in 1813 a "Literature Fund" was created to provide regular State subsidies to the academies.

Creation of a State Common School System

It may seem odd to modern educators that the State acted to develop a system of private academies for more advanced students, before it created an elementary public school system. In fact, the Regents declared in 1787 that:

> the erecting [of] Public Schools for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic is an object of very great importance which ought not to be left to the discretion of private men, but be promoted by public authority. Of so much knowledge no citizen ought to be destitute, and yet it is a reflection as true as it is painful that but too many of our youth are brought up in ignorance.[2]

Responding to this and similar appeals, the Legislature in 1795 inaugurated a system of State aid to encourage establishment and support of common schools. Each year, $50,000 was to be divided among the various towns. In each town, the citizens were supposed to create school districts, and each district would receive the State subsidy and a matching town subsidy, in proportion to pupil attendance. Within a few years, over 1,300 schools, enrolling almost 60,000 pupils, qualified for State aid under this law.

In 1800, however, the program of aid to common schools lapsed (although the schools did not necessarily close). The first step toward revival of the State program was the creation, in 1805, of a Common School Fund, based on proceeds from sale of State lands. In 1812, as the annual income of the Fund approached $50,000, a new Common School Law reestablished the system of school districts, supported by State and local funds (as well as by tuition) and administered by a State Superintendent of Common Schools.

Many of the present-day school districts of the State date to the years immediately following implementation of the 1812 law. It was a period of rapid growth in the State's population, of active settlement of the State's northern and western regions, and of the extension of schooling to the newer communities. Indeed, in 1812,

a Legislative commission had pointed to the "remote and thinly populated parts of the state" as the areas where:

> education stands greatly in need of encouragement. The people here living far from each other, make it difficult so to establish schools, as to render them convenient or accessible to all. Every family therefore, must either educate its own children or the children must forego the advantages of education. These inconveniences can be remedied best by the establishment of common schools, under the direction and patronage of the State. In these schools should be taught, at least, those branches of education which are indispensably necessary to every person in his intercourse with the world, and to the performance of his duty as a useful citizen. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and the principles of morality, are essential to every person, however humble his situation in life.[3]

This need to encourage education, especially in the less prosperous rural areas, remained a major theme of the State's educational system well into the twentieth century.

City Schools

Nineteenth-century cities, like those of today, mixed wealth and poverty. As centers of commerce and industry, cities had great resources, but they also had many poor families in need of assistance in educating their children. The pattern that developed in New York City reflected this dichotomy. While many families continued to patronize private schools and independent schoolmasters, a parallel system of urban schools for the poor was created. In 1805, some of the City's leaders formed the Free School Society, to conduct schools for "all children who are the proper objects of a gratuitous education." This society, later known as the Public School Society, gradually expanded its system of schools and served as the major provider of public education in New York City through the 1840s.

The schools of the Public School Society were conducted according to a distinctive scheme known as the Lancasterian or "monitorial" system of instruction. In such schools, the teacher instructed a group of older pupils, or monitors, who in turn

instructed squads of younger pupils. Such schools, where one teacher might serve several hundred pupils altogether, were obviously quite economical, a feature attractive to their promoters.

By the 1840s, however, controversy had developed over the apparent Protestant orientation of the Public School Society. Many of the poorer families of the city were Catholic immigrants who doubted the impartiality of the Society's schools. The outcome was the creation, in New York City, of a Board of Education to operate a system of "ward" schools, more nearly comparable to the district schools of the rural towns. In effect, public education had become defined as schooling provided by a governmental agency under public control.

Students and Teachers

Outside the cities, the typical school of mid-nineteenth century New York was a one-room, one-teacher school, in which pupils of varied ages took their lessons. Larger villages might have an academy, and in the cities, larger schools enrolling several hundred pupils were the norm. Attendance was voluntary, but an impressively large proportion of children attended school. It has

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One-room school house, still in operation in 1950s.

been estimated that, as early as the 1830s, as many as 90 percent of all nonurban youth in New York attended school for at least a period of time. A child's school years might be intermittent, however especially for older children who often attended school in winter and worked on the farm in other seasons. Relatively few stayed in school past age fifteen.

The teaching staff of rural schools varied with the seasons. Traditionally, a man taught the winter session, in which the older boys generally enrolled, while a woman taught in summer, when the pupils tended to be younger. Men were paid more than women, and it was presumed that men had better powers of discipline over older children. Gradually, the attractiveness of savings from hiring women, together with a growing sense of women's suitability as educators, led to a feminization of the teaching force. By the 1880s, most teachers, year-round, were women, many of whom made a career of teaching. In the cities, where seasonal considerations were less significant, both men and women tended to teach year-round, with men teaching the older pupils or holding supervisory positions.

Schooling in an Industrial Era

Late nineteenth-century New York experienced rapid growth in both population and industrial activity. Its cities overflowed, as migrants from the farms of the Northeast and immigrants from overseas poured in, seeking opportunity. Education reflected this trend, as the growing thousands of children enrolled in schools that were themselves increasingly large and complex in organization, and linked with others in vast systems. Schools also found themselves turned to as agencies that might facilitate the new industrial era and ameliorate some of its rough spots. The public hoped that schools might contribute to the "Americanizing" of immigrants, to the social sorting of youth destined for factory or shop, and to the reduction of social class conflict.

Essential to any broad social role for schools was their universality. In rural areas, this meant the improvement of sometimes rudimentary schools through the raising of standards of teaching and by extending the school year. This cost money, and major steps were taken in the 1850s to expand the State's financial assistance to the poorer rural school districts. Along with this money came an effort to eliminate tuition fees which were be-

Mechanical Drawing, Saunders Trades School, Yonkers, ca. 1910.

lieved to exclude some pupils. Most cities eliminated tuition in the 1840s and 1850s, and it ended statewide in 1867.

As the proportion of urban youth increased, the idea of compulsory school attendance was frequently proposed. This was a controversial question, since such deprivation of liberty, practiced in some European countries, seemed contrary to our democratic traditions. On the other hand, the State's responsibility to care for neglected and disorderly youth, who neither attended school nor worked, was generally acknowledged. The State's first compulsory attendance law was adopted in 1874, but like similar laws elsewhere, it was susceptible to only incomplete enforcement. In fact, city schools were so overcrowded that they had to turn away many eligible applicants, and would have had no way to accommodate all the truants had they returned.

While the schools of the State theoretically sought to enroll all the children of the State, one group was conspicuously excluded. Before the Civil War, most cities of the State required Black children to attend separate "Colored" schools, sometimes taught

Margaret West, first woman principal, Auburn, from 1866–1910.

by Black teachers. After the War, a trend toward desegregation reflected the principles of racial equality of the Reconstruction era. In part as a result of the State Civil Rights Act of 1873, and in part because of organized pressure from Black citizens, most cities opened their regular schools to Black children in the 1870s and 1880s.

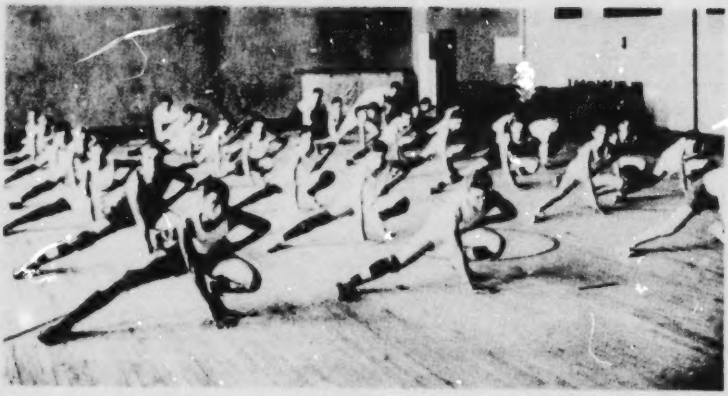
As urban school systems grew, educational leaders perceived a need for a more elaborate and refined organizational structure. By the late 1800s the typical urban school was graded, with pupils divided into 12 or 14 half-year grade levels, each taught by a separate female teacher. These teachers were generally governed by a male principal who, in turn, reported to a professional city superintendent of schools.

The role of citizens in this arrangement was a subject of controversy. While some people favored the virtues of citizen participation typical of rural school districts, the trend was towards the insulation of schools from the influence of parents and other average citizens. In New York City, for example, a reorganization of the Board of Education in 1896 eliminated the previously powerful local Ward School Trustees. In 1917, the Board's membership was further reduced to just seven, chosen from the citywide elite. Under such a board, it was argued, the professional educator would be more free to shape a modern school system, designed to meet the complex needs of the industrial city.

Twentieth-Century Trends

A major educational development of the early twentieth century was the rise of high schools. Public high schools gradually replaced the academies in the late 1800s. This change arose partly from the changing notion of "public," with independent schools no longer seen as completely fulfilling public education responsibilities. The rising cost of first-rate secondary education and the emerging urban middle class that desired it, also contributed to the move toward high schools. In city after city, academies were transformed into public secondary schools and architecturally impressive public high schools opened.

By 1910, a dramatic expansion of secondary school attendance had begun. School districts raced to build new high schools to meet the demand, adapting the high school program to the varying perceived needs and interests of a diverse student body. Typi-



Physical Education class, Hempstead, ca. 1920.

cally, high schools offered separate courses of study for students planning for college, for those seeking to enter industry, and for those preparing for white-collar commercial occupations. The role of schools in sorting pupils and in defining their future status in society became a controversial one, especially as aptitude testing and guidance programs proliferated. From one perspective, the schools were helping pupils by providing an education adapted to their abilities and future needs. In another view, the schools were narrowing the opportunities available to students, often on a basis reflective of social class and ethnic origins. Nonetheless, high schools grew ever more popular. By 1940, high school attendance had come to be the normal occupation of the teenager, and the most general culmination of formal education.

If you were an elementary school pupil in 1930, you would have much in common with pupils of one hundred years before. Reading, writing, and arithmetic would still be core subjects. But much would be changed. The schools of New York not only kept up with modern curricular innovations, but were often the testing grounds for them. Progressive ideas about how children learn and about the nature of the classroom as a social setting were reflected in the work of pupils in many schools--in activity programs and group projects, in social studies, and in the encouragement of artistic expression.

The trend to recognition of a need to educate "the whole child" was spurred by publication, in 1929, of the State Education Department's "Cardinal Objectives of Elementary Education," which declared:

> It is the function of the public elementary school to help every child: (1) to understand and practice desirable social relationships; (2) to discover and develop his own desirable individual aptitudes; (3) to cultivate the habit of critical thinking; (4) to appreciate and desire worth-while activities; (5) to gain command of the common integrating knowledge and skills; and (6) to develop a sound body and normal mental attitudes.[1]

Similarly, the concerns of citizens and educators through succeeding decades permeated the school curriculum. Economic concerns of the Depression, patriotic and democratic preoccupations during World War II, issues of war and peace, race and ethnicity, world survival and environmental survival, have all had their impacts.

The early twentieth-century school teacher, as well as his or her students, could have recognized similarities and differences compared to his or her nineteenth-century counterpart. Most concrete, perhaps, was the progress towards equal rights for women teachers. Equalization of pay scales for women and men began in New York City in 1911 and was extended statewide in 1924. During the same years, women teachers generally gained the right to retain their jobs after marriage.

Teachers' status rose, also, through their increased organizational efforts. The New York State Teachers Association, which had been founded in the mid-nineteenth century, affiliated with the National Education Association and expanded its role as an advocate for the professional status of teachers. Teachers' unions, including the New York City Teachers Union, founded in 1916, and its successor in the American Federation of Teachers, worked not only to improve wages and benefits, but also to promote measures they believed would benefit schools and pupils. It was not until the 1960s, however, that teacher unions generally attained the status of collective bargaining agents. (In 1972, the State's teachers organizations merged to form the New York State United Teachers.)

Controversy and Change

The inherent tension involved in attempting to provide a universal system of education in a society based on religious, ethnic, political, and economic diversity and freedom, has produced recurrent controversy throughout the State's history. Recent decades have seen new forms of controversy and new efforts to resolve long-standing problems.

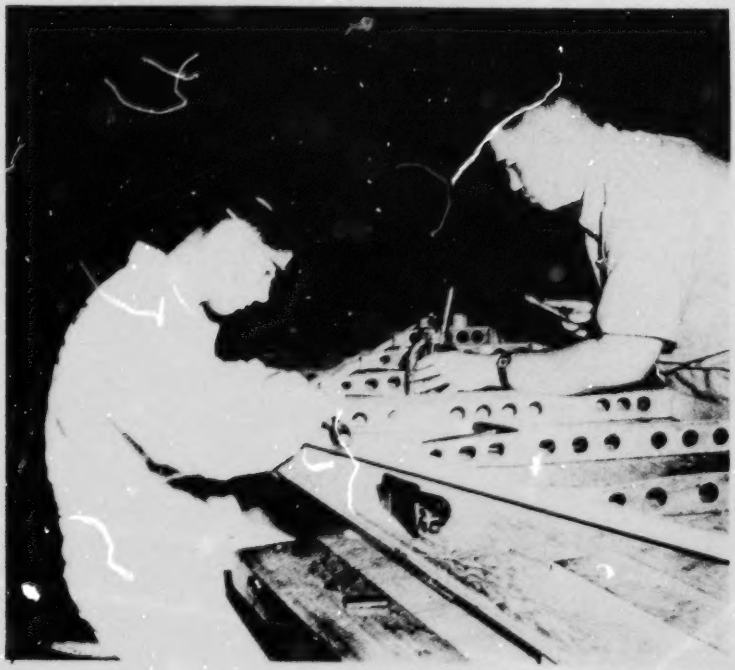
From the earliest years of public education, the question of the proper relationship between schooling and religion occupied educators. The schools of the Public School Society, in New York City, and the district schools upstate, were all, theoretically, nondenominational. But since the "principles of morality" were part of the core curriculum, the potential for controversy was unavoidable. In many schools, the Bible was made assigned reading; but which version of the Bible, Protestant or Catholic, was to be used? The intractability of such problems contributed to the decision of the Catholic church leaders, in the 1840s, to begin the development of a separate church-sponsored parochial school system.

For the public schools, the State Superintendent of Common Schools ruled in 1853 that Bible-reading could not be required in violation of a pupil's conscience, but a kind of non-denominational Protestantism nonetheless became the norm, reflected in school prayers as well as holiday celebrations and the like. While public interest in this issue waxed and waned over the years, it remained unresolved. In 1951, during a period of increased interest in school prayers, the Board of Regents tried to find a solution by adopting an official State-written nondenominational prayer and recommending its use by all school districts. It was this Regents prayer which was found unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in a historic 1962 ruling.

Educational equality also has been high among the issues of educational concern and controversy in this century. While generally accepted as a goal, equality has proven difficult to achieve. In the early years of the century, the most noticed inequality was between students in the prosperous cities and those in the poorer rural districts — exactly the inequality noted by the State's leaders in the early 1800s. As late as 1920, the State had over 10,000 school districts, of which over 8,000 had only a one-room elementary school. Many communities could not afford more

elaborate schools. Educators argued that such schools could not meet modern standards, and that rural youngsters were therefore deprived of full educational opportunities. School consolidation was part of the solution proposed, along with increased financial support. In 1925, with the support of Governor Alfred E. Smith, the State adopted a landmark Equalization Law, basing State aid on a formula that recognized the disparities in school district wealth. This principle has remained a fundamental element of all State aid programs since that time. In recent decades, however, the wealth disparity has tended to reverse itself, with cities having inadequate resources, while some suburban districts are relatively wealthy. In the case of *Levittown v. Nyquist* (1982), the State's Court of Appeals ruled that equality of school finance was not mandated by the State Constitution.

Students working on airplane parts, Delmar Central School, 1943.



Equal educational opportunity for pupils of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds has been one of the fundamental challenges of the post-World War II decades. While official segregation of Black pupils was virtually ended in New York before 1900, the "unofficial" segregation of the schools became extremely apparent, especially with the growth of the Black community in many of the State's cities. Especially after the Supreme Court's historic ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that racially segregated schools are inherently unequal, Black parents and civil rights supporters sought to persuade or compel school districts to accomplish actual desegregation. Supporting this effort was the Board of Regents, which made progress towards desegregation one of its leading statewide priorities. Sometimes under pressure of court orders, many of the State's cities have taken action to desegregate some or all of their schools, but this process is far from complete.

The 1960s and 1970s also brought a broad-based expansion of the rights of students. For handicapped children, these years saw the recognition of the fundamental right to education, from which many had been previously excluded. For children whose native language was not English, the rise of bilingual and multicultural programs was a virtual educational enfranchisement. For all pupils, the extension of civil liberties to the school setting, including freedom of expression, access to and privacy for pupil records, and due process in disciplinary matters, gave hope that the democratic rhetoric of education would be made reality.

Conclusion

The history of education in New York State has been, in part, the evolution of a school system. Over time, a network of schools was built up, reaching communities throughout the State, and supported and supervised by central educational authorities. But this history has been, as well, the story of the interrelation between changing educational patterns and the larger social forces shaping the lives of the people of the State. Both of these aspects of our history have made their mark on each of our schools and communities. The story of schools, education, and community impact, awaits those who would venture to rediscover it.

Footnotes

1. Charles Y. Lincoln, ed., *Messages From The Governors* (Albany, 1906), volume II, p. 321.
2. Minutes of the Board of Regents, February 16, 1787, in *Proceedings of the Twelfth Anniversary of the University Convocation of the State of New York* (Albany, 1875), pp. 252-254.
3. Lincoln, ed., *Messages From the Governors*, volume II, p. 720.
4. University of the State of New York, *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Education Department* (Albany, 1929), volume I, p. 11.

III. Milestones in the History of Education

The following list indicates major events in education in New York State.

1784 The Regents of The University of the State of New York were established by law. The Regents were to govern the former Kings College (renamed Columbia College), to establish and govern other schools and colleges, and to award degrees.

1787 The powers of the Regents were changed. Henceforth, they would charter schools and colleges, each of which would be governed by its own Board of Trustees. The first academy charter was granted.

1795 First general State aid was provided to common schools (continued until 1800).

1805 The permanent Common School Fund was created from proceeds of sales of State lands.

1812 The Common School Act divided towns of the State into school districts and, as amended in 1814, provided for administration and financing of schools, including State aid, local taxes, and tuition fees ("rate bills").

1813 The Literature Fund was created for aid to academies.

1834 Program of aid to academies with teacher training departments was adopted.

1844 The first State normal school for training teachers was established at Albany.

1849 The Free School Act provided for elimination of rate bills.

1851 The Free School Act was repealed, but a massive new State aid program provided major funding for localities.

1853 The Union Free School Act encouraged consolidation of school districts, elimination of tuition fees, and creation of "academic" or secondary-level programs.

1854 The Department of Public Instruction was established to supervise the school system.

1865 The Regents Examination system was started.

1867 Rate bills (tuition) ended statewide.

1873 State Civil Rights Act sought to eliminate racial segregation by providing for equal access to public schools.

1874 Compulsory attendance in school was required for children ages 8-14. The study of reading, spelling, writing, English grammar, and arithmetic was required.

1894 The Revised State Constitution made explicit provision for a "system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated."

1903 The age for compulsory attendance was raised to 16.

1904 The State Education Department and the office of Commissioner of Education were established under the Board of Regents.

1913 The Central Rural School Act encouraged rural school districts to consolidate and form more efficient units of education.

1917 Legislation was passed to require the establishment of classes for physically handicapped children.

1925 The "equalization" formula for State school aid was introduced, targeting aid to districts with the least local resources.

1938 Normal schools were changed to teachers colleges and the course of study was extended from three to four years.

1948 A broadened civil rights law was passed, requiring all educational institutions to admit students without regard for race, color, religion or national origin.

1948 The Boards of Cooperative Educational Services were established.

1954 Separate schools for Indian children were abolished.

1974 Legislation was passed to prohibit discrimination against the disabled in education.

1976 Programs for the gifted and talented were expanded.

1983 The Regents developed an action plan to improve the quality of education in New York.

1984 The statewide celebration of the Bicentennial of the Board of Regents provided an opportunity to assess past accomplishments and chart future directions for education in New York State.

First class graduated from new high school, Plattsburgh, 1914.

IV. Historical Resources Available in the Community

This section describes the variety of historical records and other resources available for researching the history of local schools and suggests where to locate them. Some, like yearbooks and school newspapers, may be found in the school library. If the school published its minutes and annual reports, the local public library may have copies. Attendance records, unpublished minutes of the Board of Education meetings, and other school records should be located in the school's files. Institutions and people in the community can provide other historical records and informational resources.

Printed Sources

- **Textbooks**. Some schools retain copies of textbooks used in years past. These can be useful for comparison to modern texts on the same topics.
- **Yearbooks**. School yearbooks are wonderful sources of information on local school history. They provide a graphic view of school life, ranging from how students looked to what they did in extracurricular hours.
- **School newspapers**. Like yearbooks, school newspapers are a form familiar to students. They reflect the range of school activities, issues of importance to students, and the attitudes of students toward those issues. They are often a lively and amusing resource for student research.
- **Student handbooks**. Handbooks show the variety of past rules and regulations. They reveal society's changing social

mores through statements on appropriate conduct, proper dress standards, and general behavior requirements.

- **Curriculum**. Copies of required State curriculum identify the subjects considered important during a given time period. They show what skills were considered necessary to a young person's development.

School Records

- **Minutes of Meetings of Board of Education or Trustees of Common Schools**. These minutes summarize proposals, motions, resolutions, and all other matters formally considered and voted on. They provide identification of members of the board, school officials, and teachers. They may also contain information on school district boundaries; location, construction and maintenance of buildings; qualifications for admission; rules of student behavior; and statistics on attendance. The minutes, often in book form, may be supplemented by petitions, contracts, and reports. Minutes also exist for Boards of Cooperative Educational Services and County Vocational Education and Extension Boards.
- **Financial reports**. Reports and summaries of receipts and disbursements show the changing costs of maintaining schools, and the varying products and services needed by schools.
- **Annual reports**. These reports, usually in narrative form, summarize attendance statistics, fiscal status, major events, and special projects.
- **Payrolls**. These provide the names of employees and show the wages paid. They are useful for comparing salary levels with those of today.
- **Annual budgets**. Budgets include information on school tax rates and estimates of revenues, and on maintenance and operating expenses.
- **School censuses**. Censuses are taken to obtain important data on students to use in planning for facilities, programs and services. They can be used to identify students by name, age, sex, level of attainment, and their parents or guardians.
- **Building plans**. Original construction and subsequent structural modifications can be traced through building plans.

- **Attendance registers**. These are official documents recording student attendance and tardiness. Like school censuses, they are a good source of information on individual students.
- **Course curriculum material**. In some schools, it may be possible to locate copies of old State Education Department curriculum materials, notes and lesson plans used by teachers, and essays and other papers submitted by students.
- **Tests and class assignments**. Copies of tests and homework assignments also indicate the levels and kinds of knowledge valued at certain times. Varying emphasis on skills such as memorization, critical thinking, and physical and moral training tell much about contemporary social values.

Other Historical Records

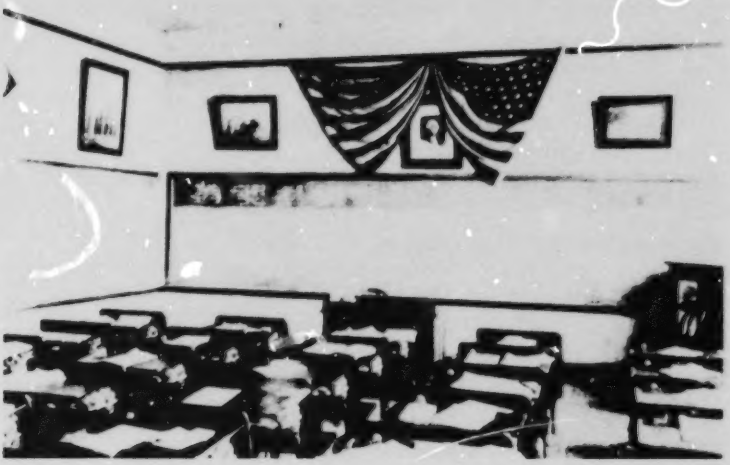
- **PTA records**. Minutes of meetings and newsletters from this type of organization show the issues of concern to parents and the activities they conducted to support the school.
- **Teachers' union records**. A variety of teachers' concerns can be found in the meeting minutes, newsletters, and informational pamphlets from local unions.
- **Letters, diaries, and other personal records**. Letters or diaries written by students or parents often describe classroom experiences, school events, and community developments involving schools.

Other Community Resources

Several other sources that can usually be found in the community may be useful. These include:

- **School memorabilia**. Many people keep a variety of remembrances from their school years. Class photographs, school play programs, concert programs, sports or academic awards, and club activity programs reflect various aspects of school social life.
- **School work**. Other common personal resource materials are copies of theme books, written assignments, tests and reports, kept by former students. They show student learning activities, interests, and capabilities.

- **Personal recollections**. An interesting way of obtaining individual perspectives and other important information is to conduct "oral history" interviews. Students can interview school graduates, teachers and administrators. People often recall and will share information that is not recorded on paper about past events. These interviews, whether taped or written, are rich resources for understanding the educational system.
- **Local newspapers**. Articles frequently appear here on school activities, Board of Education meetings, and a variety of educational issues. The newspaper can reflect contemporaneous opinions on a variety of social and educational topics related to the school. Newspaper files also sometimes retain photographs taken or used by the paper's staff.



School classroom, 1911.

V. Locating and Using Historical Resources

Historically valuable official school records should be located within the school itself. The key records series should be available in the Superintendent's or Principal's office or with the District Clerk. Often, older records are stored in separate rooms, attics or basements, or other storage areas, and locating them may require some searching and inquiries to the clerk and to building custodial personnel. Town, city, and village records containing information on schools or educational matters are in the custody of the official clerks of those local governments.

Nongovernmental historical records and published versions of minutes, reports, and other education-related materials, may be located in local libraries, historical societies, and museums. There are no statewide guides to historical records, although Cor-

nell University's New York Historical Resources Center has for a number of years been conducting a statewide survey and inventory of historical records repositories. By mid-1984 this Historical Documents Inventory (HDI) had covered the Southern Tier, Central and Western New York, and Staten Island, and was beginning to survey the remainder of New York City and the North Country. The HDI produces a listing of historical records and a detailed index for each county. For more information, contact the New York Historical Resources Center, Olin Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850, or the State Archives. Officially appointed town, village, city, and county Historians can also be helpful in locating and interpreting materials. Furthermore, Historians often know, and are willing to share, information on educational developments in their community. In that sense, they themselves are "resources" as well as being helpful in locating source materials.

The following suggestions may be helpful for locating needed materials:

- Call offices in advance so that you can find out whether it could be useful to look for materials there and to arrange for a time convenient for the office.
- Tell people the kinds of resources you're looking for and what you're going to do with them. This will save both of you time, and may prevent your having to search through old — but irrelevant — records.
- Check to see if there are indexes or other guides to the historical records or other material. These can take you directly to the information you want, but don't expect that they will exist for most records.
- Check about the possibility of making copies. Usually you can't — and shouldn't — bring the originals into your class. You can photocopy many documents. For large, colored, or fragile documents, a 35 mm camera will make adequate slides or prints to photocopy. If all else fails, and the information is particularly valuable, you can type or recopy documents.
- Above all, be patient. It may take a while to find who has records, and to locate the information you want. Take advantage of the knowledge of your school staff, local clerk, local historian, historical society, and librarians. They can save you time and trouble by directing you to the right places.

VI. Interdisciplinary Activities With Historical Records

This section provides a range of suggestions for classroom activities on local educational history. They vary in level and complexity, and they can be altered or expanded to meet special needs. The kinds of historical records that might be used for each activity are suggested, along with basic procedures, and follow-up activities.

1. The History of Our School

Historical resources: all those mentioned previously.

Procedure: Students can research and write a complete history of their school. It may be useful to involve more than one class in this project. Each class could research developments relating to a separate decade or topic. Students can "publish" the history in the school newspaper. The local newspaper may be willing to publish the results of student research, or the local historical society might assist in a special publication.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Use the research as a basis for a theatrical production showing vignettes from various decades.
(2) Prepare a photographic and documentary exhibit on the school's history.
(3) Have secondary school students write and illustrate the school's history for elementary students.

2. "A Day in the Life"

Historical resources: Class lists, class schedules, old textbooks, tests, and curricula.

Procedure: Have each student assume the identity of a person on a class list from an earlier time. Students might then research the life of young people at that time, and construct a typical identity for themselves. Using old textbooks and assignments, conduct a one-hour class following methods characteristic of the chosen period. A variation of this approach is to have students in small groups research different historical periods and present lessons characteristic of their period with one student acting as teacher, the rest as students.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Have students list the advantages and disadvantages of the educational methodology from the earlier period.
(2) Ask students to discuss or write an essay on the similarities and differences between the earlier period and their own school experience.
(3) Imagining they are students or teachers from the earlier period, students may write or make an oral presentation on their perceptions of schools today.

3. Educational Issues Debate

Historical resources: School Board minutes, student newspapers.

Procedure: Review School Board minutes and student newspapers to identify controversial issues and problems. Divide students into small groups, assigning each an issue. After research and development of arguments, the group can conduct debates or present small group views on those issues.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Discuss with students why certain issues were of importance in specific historical periods, and how the concerns reflected larger social issues of that era.

(2) Have students imagine they were in school at the time of the issue researched, and ask them to write their thoughts on the issue covered in the debate. As an alternative, assign small groups to compose a dialogue among students reflecting their reaction to the issue and to act it out.

4. "This is Your Life"

Historical resources: Class lists, yearbooks, grade cards, theme books, School Board minutes.

Procedure: Have each student assume the identity of a student, a teacher, a school administrator, or a School Board member. Based on the resources indicated above, have the student compile the maximum factual information on that person.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Assign each student to create a "This is Your Life" scrapbook biography of the person researched.
(2) Using the researched information, have students make an audio tape of the person's recollections about his or her involvement with the school.

5. "Who Was There?"

Historical resources: Class lists, attendance records, census records.

Procedure: A variety of statistical data may be compiled from these resources. For example, student enrollment figures can be compiled over a number of years. These figures can be summarized in a student enrollment time line. Students can check attendance patterns and can determine seasonal fluctuations.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Have students compare student statistics to overall population statistics, such as the State or Federal census schedules, for their community. Discuss whether they show similar patterns of change.

(2) Identify major historical and social developments (such as wars, depression) on the time lines. Discuss the possible implication of these events on the student enrollment figures.

6. "Don't Do That!"

Historical resources: School Board minutes, rules and regulations, student handbooks.

Procedure: Assign groups of students to compile information on school rules and discipline over a series of decades, including the present one. Groups can then make lists for each decade and post on a bulletin board for comparison.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Choose recent decades for investigation, and have students conduct oral interviews with people who went to school during the assigned period. Ask about their perceptions of the rules, and of the discipline methods used.
(2) Put the rules and discipline in the context of their historical period and discuss with students why they may have seemed appropriate in that time period.
(3) Have students compare and contrast past disciplinary procedures with those in effect today.

7. "What Did You Learn in School Today?"

Historical resources: Curriculum, report cards, yearbook.

Procedure: Assign each group of students a grade level. Ask them to track the subjects taught or required for that level over a series of decades.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Have students chart the course changes, then discuss their possible causes.
(2) In addition to course lists, have students compile and reproduce sample class assignments, then mount and exhibit them in the school. This could be done a decade at a time over the course of a school year.

8. **"Welcome to the Club"**

Historical resources: Personal paper collections, oral histories, yearbooks.

Procedure: Have students assemble information on school clubs in past years. Discuss the reason such clubs existed, and their attraction to students.

Follow-up Activities:

(1) Ask students to organize some of the activities sponsored by previous clubs such as debating societies, theater groups, musical groups, or others that interest them.

VII. For Further Reading

Publications on the history of education in New York State

The following are general works with application to New York State:

Cremin, Lawrence A. *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education* (New York: Knopf, 1961).
A classic analysis of this many-sided movement.

Johnson, Clifton. *Old-Time Schools and School-books* (New York, 1904; reprinted, New York: Dover Publications, 1963).
A profusely illustrated classic description of the one-room rural schools of the early nineteenth-century and of the schoolbooks used in them. Its glimpses into the lives of students and teachers are especially intriguing.

Tyack, David B. *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).
A leading modern analysis of the rise of urban school systems, presenting a clear and readable explanation of the relationship between changes in schools and the larger social context.

The following works specifically relate to New York State:

Berrol, Selman. *Immigrants at School: New York City, 1898-1914* (Salem, N.Y.: Ayer Company, 1978).
The leading study of this crucial period when schools were shaped by the realities of mass immigration.

Hobson, Elsie Garland. *Educational Legislation and Administration in the State of New York, 1777-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1918).

Useful especially for its systematic listings of legislative acts affecting many localities of the State.

Kaestle, Carl F. *The Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

A path-breaking study that clarifies the varying forms of schooling available during the period.

Kilpatrick, William H. *The Dutch Schools of New Netherland and Colonial New York* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912).

Still the main source for this period.

Mabee, Carleton. *Black Education in New York State from Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979).

The most comprehensive and useful study of this significant theme.

Miller, George Frederick. *The Academy System of the State of New York* (Albany, 1922; reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1969).

An older work, but still useful, especially for its detailed listings of data about individual schools.

Ravitch, Diane. *The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805-1973* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

A very readable analysis that reveals much of the social and political substance behind major educational controversies.

Ravitch, Diane and Ronald Goodenow, eds. *Educating an Urban People: The New York City Experience* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1981).

A collection of essays on major themes in the City's educational history.

Reigart, John Franklin. *The Lancasterian System of Instruction in the Schools of New York City* (New York: Teachers College 1916).

Although an older work, it contains many useful illustrations and details about curriculum and method in the schools of early nineteenth-century New York.

Publications on teaching techniques

The following publications provide helpful information and guidance on locating and using historical records and other community sources to teach topics pertaining to local history:

Kyvig, David E. and Myron A. Marty. *Nearby History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982).

This volume is a general introduction and guide for anyone interested in local history. It provides an extensive discussion of local resources, including storytelling, published and unpublished documents, artifacts, landscape and architecture.

Lord, Clifford. *Teaching History with Community Resources* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1967).

A basic introduction to people, places and documents for use in the classroom. Ideas for projects and classroom activities are given.

Metcalf, Fay D. and Mattew T. Downey. *Using Local History in the Classroom* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982).

This book discusses skills development, course content and sources for local history. It is aimed at the secondary level and was written by classroom teachers.

Roe, Kathleen. *Teaching with Historical Records* (Albany, N.Y.: State Education Department, 1981).

A general introduction to the variety of historical records available for classroom use. Sample records with accompanying questions and activities are provided. Copies were mailed to all Social Studies Curriculum Coordinators in New York State in 1981. For information on securing additional copies, please contact the State Archives.

Roe, Kathleen and James Corsaro. *Local History in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Historical Materials and Their Classroom Use* (Troy, N.Y.: Russell Sage College, 1983).

This guide discusses the published resources, historical records, and material culture available for classroom use. It includes suggested activities and bibliographies. The guide

concentrates on the Upper Hudson region, but the resources are representative of those found in any community.

Weitzman, David L. *Underfoot: An Everyday Guide to Exploring the American Past* (New York: Scribner, 1976).
This book provides information on locating and interpreting "everyday" historical documents, artifacts and places.

Reference kits

The New York State Historical Association can provide teachers with a variety of instructional materials on local history. The Association has available for purchase a "Basic Reference Kit" that introduces teachers to local history, and an "Advanced Reference Kit" for teachers who want more detailed advice. Both kits are geared to Fourth Grade Social Studies classes. Both include books, leaflets and reprints, and audiovisual materials. For more information, contact the Education Department, New York State Historical Association, Box 800, Cooperstown, New York 13326.